

Implementation

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- District Support
- Administrator Support
- Conditions for Effectiveness
- Steps to Implementation
- Impact of Program Transformation
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Conclusion

District Support

It is important to recognize that in Idaho, the school counseling program is adopted at the district level. As a reminder, the Perkins funds available from the Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education (PTE) are not intended to be the sole source of funding for professional school counselors; in other words, PTE is not to be the sole source of funding for a program designed to serve all students. Districts and local schools generally provide all or most all funding to support professional school counseling.

Administrator Support

Administrator support is necessary to ensure effective implementation of the school counseling program. The professional school counseling staff, including the administrator in charge of the school counseling department, collaborates to make management decisions. Site principals and administrators are involved in this process for several important reasons.

- Administrators are the school leaders who understand the school's direction and needs.
- Administrators who meet regularly with the counseling staff to discuss the school's mission and the counseling program are critical links in supporting

the school's mission and meeting student needs.

- An involved and supportive administrator is one of the school counseling program's best advocacy tools.
- Administrators and professional school counselors work collaboratively to create a systemic and interdependent approach to improve student academic achievement.
- Both professional school counselors and administrators are especially alert to and responsible for the needs of every student, including those who are underserved (Van Zandt, Burke & DeRespino, 1998).

Conditions for Effectiveness

Program

- Every student, parent or guardian, teacher and other recipient of the school counseling program has equal access to the school counseling program.
- The program operates in a supportive work environment and has an adequate budget and school counseling and guidance curriculum materials.
- The professional school counselor works cooperatively with parents or guardians, teachers and community partners and follows ASCA and local policies regarding counseling with students.
- School administrators understand and support the program's priorities and needs.
- The Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education and the Idaho School Counselor Association provide statewide leadership, training and technical assistance as the schools implement a counseling program.

Staff

- Professional school counselors hold a valid Idaho Pupil Personnel Services Certificate.
- Professional school counselors may hold a valid Idaho Career Counselor endorsement.
- Professional school counselor responsibilities are clearly defined to make maximum use of the professional school counselor's expertise.
- The student-to-counselor ratio is appropriate to implement the designed program. The American School Counselor Association and the Idaho School Counselor Association recommend a ratio of one professional school counselor to every 250 students.
- All staff members accept responsibility for the infusion of school counseling and guidance student outcomes into the program.
- Professional school counselors are members of their state and national professional associations.

Budget

- A school counseling department budget is established to support program needs and goals.
- Budgets similar to those of other departments are established at the local or district level.
- Local, state and federal funds are made available to support the program's goals.

Materials, Supplies and Equipment

- Materials are relevant to the program and appropriate for the community.
- The professional school counselor consults with the advisory committee and the local board policy concerning the evaluation and selection of program materials.
- Materials, supplies and equipment are easily accessible and of sufficient quantity to support the program.
- All professional school counselors have locking file cabinets, private telephone lines and computers with Internet access in their offices.

Facilities

- All facilities are easily accessible and provide adequate space to organize and display school counseling materials.
- The professional school counselor has a private office that is designed with consideration of the student's right to privacy and confidentiality.
- As available, access is provided to facilities for meeting with groups of students.

Technology

- Professional school counselors use technology daily in their work, including the Internet, word processing, student database systems and presentation software.
- Professional school counselors use technology, especially the *Idaho Career Information System*, to help students perform career and advanced

- educational searches and create online portfolios.
- Professional school counselors use data regarding their school population to work with the principal, teachers and advisory council in making recommendations to improve academic achievement.
- Professional school counselors receive yearly training in all areas of technology advancement and updates.
- Professional school counselors use technology in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the school counseling program.
- Professional school counselors use technology as a tool to gather, analyze and present data to drive systemic change.

Steps to Implementation

As schools and districts adopt the *Idaho School Counseling Model*, based on the *ASCA National Model*[®], there are five steps to implementation: planning the program, building the foundation, designing the delivery system, implementing the program and making the program accountable through evaluation processes. The steps outlined below will help manage the transition to a school counseling program. During the transition, school teams may consider these questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- Who are our partners?
- How do we get to where we want to be?
- How will we know when we are there?

1. Planning the Program

The planning phase starts by aligning with the *Idaho School Counseling Model*. As schools and districts work to initiate the change, it is essential that everyone work toward the same goal.

A. Securing Commitment

- First, read the *Idaho School Counseling Model*, based on the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*[®].
- Determine and agree that change is necessary.
- Understand the conditions necessary for effective change.
- Expect some resistance to change.

- Appreciate and accept the challenges involved.
- Facilitate communication between professional school counselors and administrators.
- Follow the American School Counselor Association's and the State of Idaho's Codes of Ethics.

B. Getting Organized

- Form a group of professional school counselors and staff members to work as a program development team.
- Obtain formal approval from the Board of Trustees to proceed with the development of a school counseling program based on the *Idaho School Counseling Model*.
- Create a timeline for program development.
- Compile your own comprehensive school counseling program manual as you go through the stages of implementation.

C. Assessing Your Current Program

- Use the Professional School Counselor Performance Standards to identify components and elements in place and to be developed.
- Identify current counseling and guidance curriculum, activities and services.
- Review activities in light of the delivery system.
- Conduct a professional school counselor use-of-time analysis.

- Prepare a report of the use-of-time analysis.
- Identify how current resources are used, who is served by the current program and areas for program improvement.

2. Building your Foundation

A. Assessing Needs of the School and District

- Use data from surveys for teachers, parents or guardians and students to identify needs.
- Use school achievement and related data, including attendance, dropout rates, graduation rates, and college attendance rates.
- Identify current program strengths and areas where improvement is needed.

B. Committing to the Program

- Discuss beliefs about students and learning, your philosophies and mission.
- Write the program philosophy.
- Write the program mission statement.

C. Selecting Competencies

- Identify student standards, competencies and indicators that address the need areas.
- Identify a developmental continuum of goals and competencies to be achieved over time.
- Determine program priorities based on data and school needs.
- Identify desired student standards, competencies and indicators by grade level or by domain.

3. Designing the Delivery System

After creating a philosophy, designing a mission statement and determining competencies for the school counseling program, priorities are identified and corresponding percentages of professional school counselor time are allocated to each component in the delivery system. A professional school counselor's job description that reflects 100 percent school counseling and guidance activities would also be developed, focusing on direct services and program support.

The program must be clear, purposeful and presented in a manner that can be easily understood by all who are involved in the program.

- Identify specific counseling elements for each program component based on the time percentages chosen.
- Develop action plans.
- Identify the guidance curriculum to be used.
- Determine data you will collect when implementing the program (process, perception results, immediate, intermediate, and long-term).
- Decide who will do what and when.
- Secure administrative support.

4. Implementing the Program

In this phase, the school or district school counseling program is put into operation. The most important aspect of this phase is official approval or adoption from the school district governing board. This requires the board to have a working knowledge of the program and to be prepared to assume ownership and support all aspects of the program.

A. Setting Up the Program

- Establish the budget for the program.
- Consider the conditions for effectiveness mentioned in the *Idaho School Counseling Model* and the *American School Counselor Association National Model®*.
- Complete the management agreement forms.

B. Working in the Program

- Develop a master planning calendar for the program at all levels.
- Determine professional school counselor target time allocations based upon the program's design.
- Develop a weekly and monthly planning calendar based on the master calendar.
- Conduct professional development activities.
- Launch the program by implementing the guidance curriculum for each grade level.

- Select at least one closing-the-achievement-gap activity to implement and measure.

C. Promoting the School Counseling Program

- Develop a brochure.
- Present the program to the school site staff.
- Develop a web site for the school counseling department.
- Present the program to the governing board for official approval.

5. Making the Program Accountable

In this phase, the school implementation team or district will determine how successful the program adoption has been. When the program is fully implemented, an evaluation to determine the program's effectiveness is conducted and shared with the advisory council. At this point, after one year of a fully implemented school counseling program, schools can arrange for an on-site review of the program by an out-of-district team, using the *Idaho School Counseling Model* performance review and the standards for effective program implementation. Evaluation provides the information to ensure that there is a continuous process to measure the results of the school counseling program.

A. Monitoring Program Results

- Develop program results reports.
- Develop evaluation standards and indicators to monitor program implementation.

- Revisit your program self-evaluation to determine areas of improvement and areas requiring more attention.
- Reflect on the results when making decisions for program adjustment and improvements.
- Assess how the counseling team is working together.

B. Monitoring Professional School Counselors' Growth and Performance

- Encourage and promote counselor professional growth.
- Develop a job description.
- Develop and use appropriate forms to supervise and evaluate professional school counselors on job performance consistent with local district policy.

C. Monitoring Students' Progress

- Assess student mastery of selected student competencies.
- Assess impact of school counseling program on selected goals in the action plan (process, perception and results data).
- Assess the impact of the school counseling program in the areas of academic and professional-technical, life and career planning, personal and emotional, social and relational, behavioral, health and nutrition, and leisure and recreation.
- Prepare and share the results report with the school site, parents or guardians and school board.

(Adapted from Michigan School Counselor Association, 1997 & Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1998.)

The following two sections are provided for administrators and district personnel who are not familiar with school counseling programs.

Impact of School Counseling Program Implementation and Transformation

In a recent school counselor survey conducted in the Moreno Valley Unified School District, Moreno Valley, Calif., that followed the process of transforming its school counseling program, the following comments were collected:

How has your program changed?

"We provide more direct services to students than ever before."

"We have more accountability for how we impact students."

"We now have fewer clerical responsibilities as a result of administrators understanding our role."

"We have been supported to receive more counselor staff development."

"We provide more guidance lessons – at all levels."

"Our work is more student-focused, not administrator-focused."

"The staff is more aware of what we do."

What were your obstacles?

"Changing our philosophy."

"Facing fear of failure (some of us had never done classroom guidance presentations)."

"Needing more pre-post tests – now we have created our own and shared with each other."

"Learning what results-based really means."

"Some of our 'old' counselors needed to adjust and get on board."

"I felt guilt initially when I stopped enabling my administrators when doing non-school counseling activities."

"It was hard to risk presenting to staff the first time to seek their support."

"I had to learn to trust my team."

What worked best?

"The action plans helped me focus the program and stop performing 'random acts of guidance.'"

"A calendar promoted our program and kept me on schedule."

"Guidance newsletters helped to communicate our activities to staff and students."

"Our team used collective thinking to decide what data to collect and how to measure our results."

"Regularly scheduled site counselor meetings helped us to design our program."

"The district hired a guidance assistant to assist with non-school-counseling activities so we could focus on direct service to students."

Districts will find a variety of responses from the counselors, administrators, parents or guardians and teachers when the program begins its transition to implement the *Idaho School Counseling Model*. Collaboration and communication will provide the feedback needed to revise methods or policies hampering progression toward the goals.

Regularly "taking the temperature" of those involved will motivate the cadre of leaders who are working to revise the program. Expect that each school and district will adjust the implementation overview outlined above to suit local site needs. Sharing insights with neighboring or like school systems that are implementing the *Idaho School Counseling Model* will ensure support for the counseling team when challenges threaten forward progress.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does a school or district proceed to implement a comprehensive School Counseling Program?

Once schools and districts adopt the *Idaho School Counseling Model* based on the *American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model®* for School

Counseling Programs, a team effort is required to make some changes. The team may be a counseling department, a team of K-12 professional school counselors from a district or a state cadre. The Idaho goal is to have professional school counselors at all levels with a ratio of 250 students to one school counselor. The process is challenging work that may take several years to complete, and the question remains, “Will it be worth everyone’s time and effort?” The *Idaho School Counseling Model*, as well as the *ASCA National Model*[®], recognizes that some schools have counseling programs facilitated by a single counselor. As the *Idaho School Counseling Model*, like the *ASCA National Model*[®], is not prescriptive, it can be adapted to fit a school’s needs. The process may take longer, but it is equally important.

Redesigning a program that has been in place for quite some time will require patience, teaming and collaboration as well. However, developing a school counseling program will bring new life into the current program and make it more responsive to the needs of students and the community.

We already have a program in place. Do we need to start over?

No. Your team may have already developed a mission statement guiding your department’s work. However, you may not have developed, discussed or presented it to your site administrator. Collaboration and communication with administrators are important parts of the process. Begin by taking time to reflect on the outcome of the program self-evaluation, look at areas that need development or improvement, and begin to move your program forward.

My team doesn’t want to change; I feel alone in this.

Unfortunately, this can happen. This is often due to a fear of change. However, you can make change on your own – regardless of whether others want to change. Start by asking, “What are my students’ needs?” “What do I want to

accomplish?” “What can I change?” or “What am I already doing that can be measured?” With the answers, the transformation of your school counseling program can begin.

By personally recognizing that something needs to be changed and allowing yourself to address that need for change, you can begin to work toward a more effective program. It can be as simple as designing, aligning and measuring the results of a single classroom guidance lesson, doing a pre- and post-test to see results of an intervention program, or measuring the improved attendance or behavior of a selected group of students. Once you have measured your results and shared them with others, your colleagues may want to know how they were accomplished and may begin to come on board. If not, don’t be discouraged. You can still begin on your own to develop a personal action plan to align your school counseling and guidance activities to *Idaho School Counseling Model* student outcomes and begin measuring the results of your guidance curriculum and interventions designed to close the achievement gap. Sharing your action plan with your administrator early in the year will keep him or her informed as to your activities; sharing your results with your administrator, staff and colleagues may be just the push colleagues need to join you in the movement forward.

What if I have no program in place? Where do I begin?

Moving to a comprehensive school counseling program is like remodeling a house. It is suggested that professional school counselors use the parts of the present program that fit into the *Idaho School Counseling Model* and then adjust or remodel the other parts over a three- to five-year time span. Two of the biggest changes are moving from a “service” to a “program” and ensuring the program measures results. The change process requires the ability to envision the future you desire for your department or district. It is not recommended that you completely redesign

or change everything that is being done in a school counseling department.

As you begin the journey, you will need a map. We recommend you begin by setting aside some uninterrupted time to perform a program self-evaluation. The self-evaluation contains all of the key elements in the *Idaho School Counseling Model* based on the *ASCA National Model* for school counseling

programs, and provides you with the opportunity to assess your program's strengths, weaknesses and areas where work might begin. If you have no program in place, it may appear overwhelming in the beginning, but do not despair. Seek support and encouragement from other professional school counselors, the Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education, and the Idaho School Counselor Association.

Conclusion

The Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education, the Idaho School Counselor Association and professional school counselors around the state of Idaho are committed to assisting districts as they create model school counseling programs.

A variety of information and materials are available from the Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education, the Idaho School Counselor Association, and the American School Counselor Association's resource centers on their web sites. In addition, school districts, fellow professional school counselors, counselor educators, and professional school counseling graduate students are valuable resources. Keep current by checking the ASCA web site for new information, and become part of the ASCA Scene.

Keep Us Informed

The Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education (www.pte.idaho.gov) and the Idaho School Counselor Association (ISCA) (www.idahoschoolcounselor.org) are very interested in hearing from you. We appreciate your site and district's comments and suggestions as you engage in the change process. Please contact the Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education and ISCA with your needs, struggles and successes so we may assist you and others in the collaborative effort to improve school counseling programs statewide.